

**Prime Minister Thatcher addresses Mikhail Gorbachev  
8 June 1990**

[ Mikhail Gorbachev] Mr. President, Mrs. Gorbacheva, your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen.

First may I thank you for inviting me to make this visit, and for the time and attention which you are so kindly devoting to it, when you have yourself only just returned from Canada and the United States.

I am very much looking forward to going tomorrow to Kiev, where we shall see the British Festival and the Trade Exhibition—the first ever on such a scale in the Soviet Union; and then on Sunday to Leninakan, to open the new school, which is Britain's special way of helping you to build a better future for Armenia's children after the disastrous earthquake of 1988.

Second, Mr. President, may I congratulate you most warmly—together with President Bush—on the outcome of your summit meeting in Washington. The hopes of so many people round the world go with these summits and I think they will be well satisfied with what you achieved—including the people of the Soviet Union.

The agreements which you reached in Washington will contribute to a much greater sense of confidence and stability on the international level, freeing you to concentrate on the reforms, whose purpose is to bring greater prosperity and a better life to your country. You continue to have our full support and confidence in that historic task.

Soviet reforms

Indeed I remember how you explained it to us in London when you spoke on a memorable occasion at the Guildhall last year. You said then:

"We are building an open, democratic and free society which has learned the lessons of its past, a society based on law and responsibility, a society that keeps its citizens well informed and that rests on their initiative and enterprise ... ."

The Soviet Union's new revolution is more far-reaching than any of

us—and perhaps even you, Mr. President—had previously thought possible. In the West it still takes an effort of imagination to grasp its full immensity.

Your country has chosen an historic new path for the future: — A new constitutional relationship between the republics and the central government based on consent; — A new political structure, based on multi-party democracy; — A new economic policy, based on the market. Any one of these three changes would be startling, seen against the legacy of the past. Taken together they are really remarkable.

So short are people's memories, that there is a tendency to take them for granted and to under-estimate the tremendous efforts which have already been made. Can I assure you that we don't make that mistake, but recognise how much has been achieved.

But I also remember saying to you here three years ago, that the difficulties which inevitably accompany such great change would be felt long before the benefits. Success would only be achieved by changing people's whole approach and by banishing out-dated attitudes.

Moreover no politician, in any country, can honestly promise people more than they can produce and achieve by their own efforts. For governments do not create goods and services, it is people who do that.

On previous visits to this country, I remember hearing your own people tell of their experiences in wartime—the seige of Leningrad, the battle for Stalingrad, the sacrifices, the tragedies.

We in Britain have our own memories too. I recall only too well that we longed for the day when peace would come. We would build a new world, learning the lessons of the past. We felt there would be no limit to what we could achieve.

Mr. President, we now have that peace, and whatever problems we face, they are small compared with the anxieties and sacrifices we all endured during and after the war. There was no magic solution then, only as [ Winston Churchill] Britain's greatest

statesman put it: "blood, toil, tears and sweat". There is no soft option now, only work, resolve and perseverance.

The difficulties lie not in economics, for given time those are soluble, but in whether there is the spirit to win through. And I wonder if you know, Mr. President, how many well-wishers you have the world over, willing you and your people to succeed.

### Nationalities

You have also accepted a major challenge in devolving more powers to the republics and creating a new relationship between them, one which more fully represents the strong national traditions of each.

The history is immensely complicated—I was re-reading some of it shortly before coming here—and it reminds one both of the great variety of peoples who make up the Soviet Union and of the turmoil which has characterised Central and Eastern Europe through the centuries.

As you know, Britain has never recognised de jure the incorporation of the baltic states into the Soviet Union. We have always supported self-determination for them.

My understanding is that the Soviet Union also supports that principle. So, there being no difference in principle, it really should be possible to resolve the practical problems arising from the present situation in the baltic states through discussion.

It may take time because all the details have to be carefully worked out satisfactorily. But if the will—and the good-will—are there, the solution will follow.

### The future of Germany

[ Mikhail Gorbachev] Mr. President, the consequences of Germany's unification are very high up the international agenda, as they were at your meeting with President Bush. No country is more entitled to assurance, and re-assurance, about the future of Germany than the Soviet Union.

I recall that Mr. Shevardnadze recently said that war must never again arise from German soil. We all want to be sure of that, the German people included. And the best guarantee we can have is that the German people have chosen to unite within a framework of freedom, democracy and the rule of law.

They have also chosen to remain full members of the NATO alliance. That is understandable: NATO has guaranteed their freedom for over forty years and provided the wider framework of stability in Europe which has allowed Germany to prosper mightily.

It is also their right under principle I of the helsinki final act—to which your country and mine are both signatories—to choose their alliances.

None of us dispute that there will need to be arrangements to take account of particular Soviet security concerns. But I believe we must also look at the issue in the wider perspective of Europe's future: a future based not on division into rigid blocs, but one which seeks constantly to enlarge the area of freedom and democracy.

Of course we shall all want to ensure our security: no country understands that better than the Soviet Union, as the formidable military capabilities which you have now, and intend to keep, testify. None of us knows where the next threat may come from.

But consider the prospects.

We are negotiating to reduce forces and hope to reach a CFE agreement later this year.

There is a good prospect that this will be followed by further negotiations covering both conventional and nuclear forces.

NATO is re-examining its strategy and deepening its political role in the new and less threatening situation in Europe.

All this indicates the magnitude of the changes are taking place and how far we have already moved away from the atmosphere of fear, suspicion and confrontation to which we had become

accustomed.

We must now aim also to strengthen the csce as the body in which all thirty-five of us, including the United States and yourselves, come together to discuss Europe's future security and the way ahead.

Mr. Shevardnadze has made some specific and important proposals for this, and so have I. Decisions should be reached at the CSCE summit we hope will be held later this year.

At the same time, the European Community is increasing its agreements on trade and economic cooperation with the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries, so that our daily lives become more deeply entwined.

By putting Germany's membership of NATO into this much broader context, one can see that it is part of a peaceful coming together of the countries of Europe. I believe it will add to stability and be the best guarantee which both our countries can have against any repetition of the tragedies and disasters of the past.

Conclusion

Mr President, this is a time of great and positive change: in your country, in the relationship between our two countries, in Europe as a whole, and in the world beyond.

You have made an enormous contribution to that through your personal courage, vision and leadership.

You have our warm good wishes and support as you and your people bring to fulfilment the great endeavours upon which you have embarked.

I raise my glass to you, to the success of your policies and to the happiness and prosperity of the Soviet people.